

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 19483 021915Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 19483

E.O. 11652: XGDS1
TAGS: MPOL, UK
SUBJECT: LORD CARRINGTON ATTACKS POSSIBLE NEW UK
DEFENSE CUTS

1. LORD CARRINGTON (OPPOSITION LEADER IN THE LORDS
AND FORMER TORY DEFENSE SECRETARY) DURING THE FINAL DAY
OF DEBATE ON THE QUEEN'S SPEECH ON 1 DECEMBER (LONDON
19055), WARNED THAT IF THE GOVERNMENT CUTS DEFENSE
SPENDING (AS PART OF THE IMF LOAN PACKAGE WITH ITS CON-
SEQUENT CUTBACKS IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE) ANY FURTHER IT
WOULD PUT THE UK'S NATIONAL SECURITY AT RISK. EXPRESS-
ING ALARM AT WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALREADY DONE TO
BRITAIN'S DEFENSE FORCES "IN THE PAST", LORD CARRINGTON
ARGUED THAT DEFENSE CUTS HAD BEEN SINGLED OUT "...
BECAUSE IN POLITICAL TERMS IT IS EASIER FOR THEM THAN
CUTTING OUT ANYTHING ELSE. AND IT PRESERVES THE UNITY
OF THE LABOUR PARTY." HE PROMISED THAT THE OPPOSITION
WOULD HARRY THE GOVERNMENT AND SHOW THEM UP AS "IRRE-
SPONSIBLE AND UNCONCERNED" IF THEY PROPOSE MORE NEW
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PAGE 02 LONDON 19483 021915Z

CUTS. CARRINGTON SAID HE SAW NOTHING IN THE RELATIVE

STRENGTHS OF EAST AND WEST "WHICH CAN CONCEIVABLY EX-
CUSE THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY, RATHER THE REVERSE."

2. SPEAKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT, LORD GORONWY-ROBERTS
(MINISTER OF STATE, FCO) REITERATED, EARLIER IN THE
DEBATE, THAT BRITAIN'S MEMBERSHIP IN NATO WAS "THE
CORNERSTONE" OF BRITAIN'S SECURITY AND HE PROMISED THAT
IT HAD "FIRST CALL" ON BRITAIN'S DEFENSE RESOURCES.

3. COMMENT (CONFIDENTIAL). WE KNOW THAT MULLEY RECKONS
DEFENSE WILL HAVE COME OFF RELATIVELY UNSCATHED IF NEW
CUTS ARE LIMITED TO 50 MILLION POUNDS (LONDON 19155).
THERE ARE RUMORS FLOATING AROUND WHITEHALL CORRIDORS
THAT PRESSURE FROM THE LEFT WILL FORCE A 100 MILLION PLUS
CUT. WE WOULD BE SURPRISED IF ANY NEW CUTS EXCEEDED 100
MILLION BUT ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT A 50 MILLION
CEILING IS PROBABLY MORE OPTIMISTIC THAN NOT.

4. MULLEY HIMSELF IS KEENLY AWARE OF THE DANGER OF
FURTHER UNRAVELLING OF THE UK'S DEFENSE EFFORT -- AND
HE SHOWS SIGNS THAT HE KNOWS HE HAS HIS TIME CUT OUT IN
TRYING TO KEEP BRITAIN'S DEFENSE EFFORT ON ITS PRESENT
COURSE.

ARMSTRONG

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